

LAS VEGAS GAZETTE.

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CHARLES ILFELD, Secretary.

The following, though written four years ago, just before turning the management of the Indians over to the War Department, has numerous sound suggestions which, in our opinion, deserve not only publication, but which to adopt would cause a better feeling all around:

VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS

RESPECTING INDIANS AND INDIAN MATTERS GENERALLY, BASED UPON YEARS OF PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE IN THE INDIAN SERVICE OF NEW MEXICO, RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY JOHN WARD FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE HON. COMMITTEES ON INDIAN AFFAIRS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES.

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO,
December 4th, 1868.

GENTLEMEN:—Notwithstanding all that has been said and written on the subject of our Indian affairs, as yet, we have not been able to discover any given plan which in our opinion, would better the condition of the Indians, nor such, as would be likely to put a stop to our Indian troubles. Neither have we learned, of any conclusive nor convincing proof adduced in support of any one particular system, if we except, that the "Indians must be turned over to the war Department."

The main argument used in support of this view is, that the Indians have been robbed, swindled, and persecuted by Indian Agents; and that the peaceful and innocent emigrants and settlers have suffered the consequences.

These broad assertions, are evidently made by men who know but little about the true causes of our Indian troubles, and who care less about the matter; and most of them, no doubt, are well secured at home and perhaps never saw a dozen Indians in their lives.

The Indian question say the least of it, is a terrible one; and it requires something besides misrepresentation and abuses against any particular set of men to improve its condition. Action is what is needed, and that must come from the right direction.

We are all aware that millions have been expended, that thousands of valuable lives have been sacrificed in the attempt to subjugate, and elevate the Indians; and that they are in no better condition to-day, than they were forty-years ago; and that the same unsatisfactory relations between them and us still exist. This is, providing, that history tells us the truth on the subject, which

from all that we have been able to discover, we have no right to doubt. But, if the true facts of our Indian troubles are as they have been represented, why allow a few men in the character of Indian Agents, to be the cause of so much trouble, expenditure, and even bloodshed, when the true causes are so well known as they seem to be, by friends of the plan of turning the Indians over to the war department, many of whom, are military men.

That unscrupulous Indian Agents have done wrong, may all be true. But, is this sufficient guaranty to satisfy the world, that other men, merely because they happen to wear shoulder straps, for the time being, will not do the like? And that our relations with the Indians will at once be changed for the better? If so, why in the name of goodness is not the change made?

There is no question, but that the military branch of the public service seems to be the best adapted to take charge of the Indians. But, it must be borne in mind, that this has already been tried, and found wanting. Otherwise Congress would have never interfered with the matter sufficiently to have caused the Indian Bureau to be transferred from the war department to that of the Interior, where it now is. And who can deny that there were as good and honest men in the army then, and fully as competent to manage Indians as there are now?

But be this as it may, and let us take a glance at the present condition of affairs, and at what we experience almost every day. Have we not heard of serious difficulties with Indians in more than one instance that have been brought about by the very acts of the military themselves? Have not the military declared war with the Indians, and made peace with them, whenever they saw fit to do so, without at all consulting any Indian Agent, or even the head of the Indian Department?

Do they not for the most part assume more command over the Indians, than any Indian Agent or Agents particularly on our frontiers? Have they not the entire right to police and keep order on the frontiers, especially in the Indian country, free from any obstacle whatever in the shape of Indian Agents or anybody else? Are not the military as free now, as they have always been to do all the good they please respecting our Indians, in any portion of our western frontier, and in the whole of the Indian country, just as much as if there were no Indian department in existence? And finally, in what particular have they ameliorated the condition of Indian affairs or have they given any convincing proof, that they are the only ones who should have the entire charge of the Indians, in order that our Indian troubles will be brought to an end.

Let us take as an instance the Navajo Indians. Did not the military declare war against them, and carry on such war until they were subjugated, as it is called, and afterwards place them upon a reservation selected by the military, and keep them there for six years, entirely under their control and management, without anyone preventing them from doing what they thought proper with the Indians, or for them? And did not the military themselves, again remove them back into their own country after having expended several millions of dollars in the enterprise, according to their own official reports, and after six years' experiment? And now, where is the honest and unbiased man, knowing anything about the circumstances, that can point out the least particle of benefit or improvement, that these Indians or the Territory have received from all this? What better trial or evidence, than this very one does anybody desire to demonstrate the fact that the only remedy to mitigate our Indian troubles, and to better the Indian's condition is not to be found in turning them over to the military? we think none.

There is another circumstance, that few of the men that speak and write so much about placing the Indians entirely under the military, evidently seldom, if ever, think of; and that is, that fighting is one thing, and managing another. To fight them can't manage them properly when at peace, and prevent them from committing acts of hostility, and keep them quiet and satisfied.

With very few exceptions the military man is very apt to have this draw back, his schooling, and consequent profession, is entirely different from that of any other class of men. Anything properly appertaining to their line of duty, they will take hold of with zeal and energy; their fame and reputation are at stake. But, when outside of their military duties, they are compelled to be constantly surrounded, and annoyed by a set of cowardly, lousy, dirty stinking Indians, (these being some of the degrading expressions used towards them by some people), we think many of them will not be very highly pleased with the "novel entertainment," and the result can be easily imagined.

Besides, the feeling between the soldier and the Indian is naturally antagonistic, and it will never be otherwise. Equally notorious is the fact, that the closer situated they are, and the more frequent intercourse the Indians have with the military, the less fear and respect they have for the soldier.

In making the foregoing remarks, we must not be understood as insinuating anything against the military; we have no such intention; we are fully aware, that there are as good, brave, and honest men in the Army, as there are out of it.

Again, in regard to the sacrifice of lives on the frontiers, perhaps few persons, if any, regret it more sincerely than we do. But, we are compelled to say, that much of this is brought about by the inexperience and reckless conduct of the "emigrants" themselves. Ignorant and conceited men, who think they know it all, and who will take no advice from anyone, in regard to the necessary precautions to be observed against Indian hostilities, are the very men, who have much to do in bringing about Indian difficulties. We have often heard of small parties of five or six men, when in the Indian country, making the boast that they were good for any "20 or 30 of the d-d redskins," and regardless of all consequences allow themselves to be led by this false heroism; and it is not unfrequently the case, that such parties, the first thing they know, know nothing. And then, the usual result is a "big howl" about Indians, and against Indian Agents not doing their duties, &c. &c. Moreover, we have no wish to extenuate the conduct of the Indians on the contrary, we are in favor of the policy, that all Indians should be taught to respect a white man wherever they meet him. But, what right have we to doubt, that some of our Indian raids and depredations are instigated, if not actually committed, by some of our wretched white men; when scarcely a week passes by, without we hearing of parties of "horse thieves" infesting different parts of the frontier? Men thus banded together for the purpose of plunder we will venture to say will not hesitate to commit arson and murder to obtain their ends.

It may be possible, that our remarks will be construed as coming from an "Indian sympathizer," but such is not the case, we know too much about the Indian to be anything of the kind. We know, however, sufficiently, about the true causes of many of his troubles, and of his miserable condition, not to allow ourselves to go to either extreme on the subject. Our main object is to show, that our Indian troubles do not exist altogether in consequence of the ill doings of a few Indian Agents, as many are endeavoring to make out. And also to prove beyond all doubt, that the Indian question is a "big stubborn buffalo" which, but few know how to manage; and that nine tenths of what is said and written about it, is all mere verbiage.

We will venture to say, without running much risk of denial, that even the great Congress of the nation is perplexed, if not actually confounded, with this troublesome question. And we will venture further in saying, that in our opinion, there are but few members of Congress, that would not sooner hear speak of the very devil himself, than to hear any one speak of the d-d Indian. We have as much, and perhaps more respect for the Congress of the nation than most of the advocates of the plan of turning the Indians over to the war department. But we deeply regret to be compelled to say, that the principal causes of most of our Indian troubles must be attributed to that body. There is where the entire power is concentrated, for good or for evil.

The slow motion of doing business, and the tardy action of Congress in respect to most important Indian matters, the constant changes of the officers of the Indian service, many of which are made without any just cause whatever and even without any investigation, but merely to gratify political feelings, or the malice of some political damages; the little or no care which is apparently taken in the selection of the men to fill these stations, many of whom perhaps never saw a live Indian, unless by accident. The disregard that is shown by that body to honest and truthful representations respecting Indian matters, made by the several superintendents and Indian Agents, and even the slight attention paid to those from the Indian Bureau itself; all these are facts and circumstances to be borne in mind in considering our Indian Affairs and their management hitherto, and for the truth of them we have merely to refer to the annual reports of the commissioners of Indian Affairs in which we see, that the same appeals and recommendations respecting important matters are made year after year, but without success. Indeed, one half of those reports are but mere repetitions of the same subjects appeals, &c., all evidencing that no heed is taken to them.

And the result is, the miserable and wretched condition of most of our Indians, and the Indian Affairs in general. If we examine those documents even casually we will also perceive, that many of the superintendents and Indian Agents are for months at a time without the necessary means to allow them to perform their duties properly. We also see by the same documents, that it is very frequently the case, that some of the new Agents after arriving at the Agencies to which they have been assigned, find neither money, goods, nor anything else; and in some cases not even an Indian to look after; why? because, Congress failed to make the necessary appropriation. And consequently the Indians had to go off to hunt for a living. And the results of such hunting expeditions, in most cases are, that if the game does not prove sufficient to satisfy the Indian's hunger and that of his women and children, he is bound either to steal or to starve, and there is no alternative.

And where is the civilized and honest white man, that will not sooner steal than to starve, when compelled to choose one of the two evils; especially if surrounded by his children crying for bread? O hunger! where is thy forbearance? How many good and honest white men, and even parties of them have been compelled to knock down to this grim-visaged enemy, hunger, and resort to their own horses and mules, even at the peril of being left on foot, to perish in the deep snow-covered mountains! Yet many educated white men expect an Indian to starve when surrounded by other people's stocks and corn fields; curious expectation! however, we should have very much to fall into the clutches of some of these honest individuals, particularly, if they were hungry.

Strange as it may appear, nevertheless it is a notorious fact, that the only way an Indian can call the special attention of the government to his wants is by committing robberies and murders. The inference of an Indian being peaceably and well disposed is of itself sufficient cause for him to be neglected and entirely disregarded. This has been fully demonstrated by the neglected condition of the peaceful and deserving Moqui Indians, and the Pueblos of New Mexico; who, although they have never cost the government one cent for military expeditions during the last twenty two years which they have been under our government, yet nothing is done towards elevating them from their present dormant and sorrowful condition.

These and many similar facts that can be easily pointed out, cannot but convince us, that if there is any blame to be attached to any particular set of men respecting Indian matters, Congress men should bear their full

share. This should be more specially the case, knowing as we all do, that the Indian Bureau can do nothing, comparatively speaking, without the aid of Congress.

Had Congress sometime ago, turned one half at least, of the many restrictions placed upon this branch of the service into a more liberal policy and means; and had selected the right kind of men and paid the competent salaries, many of the present abuses now heaped upon it, would have no doubt, been avoided, and a very different state of affairs would have been the result. And until all these facts are fully realized, and Congress takes hold of the "bull by the horns" in earnest, and entirely independent of all politics, the country may look for no better results. They may place the Indian Bureau under the war department, or under that of the Navy, and send it aloft, Indians and all, and our words for it, our Indian troubles will still continue, there is no use talking. A careful observation of Indian matters for the last few years, fully warrants us making the assertion.

We have no doubt that in these days of so much ill feeling, jealousy and intrigue, the foregoing remarks will be construed and misrepresented in a thousand different forms. But, be this as it may, the interest of the country, especially the frontier part, demands the truth respecting these matters to be told. Our Indian troubles should be no longer dodged; they should be properly understood by everybody, and they should be met understandingly and manfully.

And here we would respectfully suggest to the members of Congress to order at once the selection of suitable localities for permanent reservations for all the Indians now roving at large, as remote from the settlements and highways as circumstances will permit, even if they should have to be purchased for the purpose. These localities should have good arable land, good timber and plenty of good water, with as many other advantages as possible for the object intended. When any such locality is found and acquired, one of the tribes should be placed thereon. This should be done peacefully, if possible, otherwise by force, and so on with the rest of the tribes. The Indian's own interest demands this course.

Laws and regulations should not only be made, but they should also be strictly enforced. The Indians once on the reservation, should be compelled to remain within the same. And no citizen, unless actually employed by, or on business with, the government, should be allowed within its boundaries. No gold hunters nor any other kind of hunters, should be allowed to get the least foothold within any reserve.

This is a serious matter; the Indian must have a place to live on, you must procure it for him, and once you do so, you must defend it at all hazards. There is no use wavering about this matter any longer. You, Gentlemen of Congress, have allowed the Indian to be driven from "pillar to post," and to be harassed almost at pleasure, until he has become weary, bewildered and infuriated. And now you yourselves scarcely know what to do with him, or where to place him, in consequence of this, and the constant and rapid spreading of our population. And the longer you defer the matter the worse will it be for all concerned. Hence the necessity of your taking an active firm and decisive step in this matter of so vital importance, without any further loss of time. You have the power and you must apply it, and see that it is properly carried out.

The reservations should be ample; so that each male, say over twenty-one years of age, could have a lot of certain size assigned him, in severity. But the entire reservation should be held in common, so as to secure each tribe a permanent home. Regulations should be made prohibiting the Indians from selling, renting, or in any other manner disposing of any portion thereof, unless it were among themselves. These regulations should also operate against outsiders getting possession within these reserves. Care should be taken that besides the land to be actually occupied by the Indians, there should be an ample space for grazing and other purposes, within each reservation.

Once the home of the Indians is selected and properly secured, you must make it as attractive and comfortable as possible for them; for which purpose you should encourage them to build houses, to raise stock and even assist them and provide it for them with everything necessary, and allow no drawbacks, no failures of appropriations to interfere with its progress and usefulness in the least. Congress should make all Indian appropriations at least one year in advance of the usual time.

Local governments should be established on the reservations. This should be commenced by selecting some of the best and most influential men in the respective tribes, giving them titles by which they should be recognized and obeyed in accordance. These men should be supported by our authorities in the discharge of their duties, and the entire tribe should be made to know that they would have to be obeyed and respected, and all business of importance between our authorities and the tribe should be transacted through them. This, besides placing them rightly before their people, would also aid in giving them the necessary power to perform their duties properly and effectively.

A few plain and useful regulations should be established for their guidance, which should also serve as laws for the management of the tribe. Punishment for offences (unless for murder), should be moderate at first, and should be introduced by degrees. The present system of chiefs should be done away with as fast as you introduce the local government among them. One half, at least, of the chiefs now have neither power nor control over their people, hence the little or no respect they have for them. After the system of local government just proposed should be properly established, each tribe should have the right of selecting their own officers, either by a vote of their own people, or by a council of the oldest and most influential men of the tribe—say once every year, or once every two years.

[To be concluded next week.]

CLIPPINGS.

And still the wonder grows that the race of fools does not exterminate itself by its own idiotic heedlessness. A store in the town of Edge Hill, Virginia, was lately blown up and several persons injured, because, forsooth, the proprietor of the establishment thought it a brilliant idea to load a gun over a canister of powder and smoke his pipe at the same time. A spark from the pipe did the business.

A spiteful contemporary, evidently edited by a bachelor, uses the following elaborate metaphor: "I have seen lovers look into each others eyes with that sublimely silly expression characteristic of such unfortunates, somewhat like the piteous, appealing look of a forlorn calf going home through the rain." This expression has been patented.

A colored servant girl at Rutland, Vt., a few days ago attempted to cut off the nose and fingers of her mistress's little child, but was prevented by the timely arrival of the mother, whom she then attacked in a most furious manner. The result might have been fatal but for the assistance of two men who were passing the house at the time.

A soldier was lately court-martialed at Fort Sanders, Wyoming, and sentenced to forfeit \$10 of his monthly pay for three months, because he was afraid of ghosts and refused to mount guard where they were wont to walk. It is hard to require soldiers to face spectres and ghosts, as well as the "red devils" of the Western wilderness.

A couple of spies has been traveling through Somerset county, Me., with a lame horse, for which they have bought alcohol, at various drug stores. Those not having a liquor dealer's license have been followed up and mulcted by a Deputy U. S. Marshal. This is very pretty practice for Siberia, but rather small for Maine.

If the telegraph hasn't blundered in making the report, a sapient jury in Chicago have found a woman guilty of "involuntary manslaughter. Here is a new offence, unless it means that she slaughtered a man against will. That can hardly be, however, for in that case the jury would probably have acquitted her altogether.

An absent-minded gentleman, writing a letter at the breakfast-table dipped his pen in the coffee and continued his letter. Noticing his mistake, he put a lump of sugar in the ink, and then finding his second blunder, poured the contents of the ink-stand into the coffee-pot to set it right.

A physician, on presenting his bill to the executor of the estate of a deceased patient, asked, "Do you wish to have my bill sworn to?" "No," replied the executor; "the death of the deceased is sufficient evidence that you attended him professionally."

A freight train, half a mile long, consisting of four locomotives and one hundred and twenty-eight long cars, was a short time ago, run over the Pennsylvania Railroad from Harrisburg to Altoona.

A Fort Wayne newspaper reporter is doing a good work by prosecuting in the courts the keepers of disreputable dance houses and other establishments of the kind.

An unselfish suicide at Atchison, Kansas, Irving Gumar by name, left the autographic injunction, "Don't make any fuss over me, but chuck me into a hole."

A New Orleans paper says that a young widow in that city, who writes well, "is training herself for an editor." Who is the editor who is training for?

In Texas a poem entitled "The Railroad to Heaven" has been produced. A queer place for the line to start from.